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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1191
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000583

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: NEPAL: THE ROYAL QUESTION

REF: A. KATHMANDU 0025

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 0416
[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 0512

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty for reasons 1.4(b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Royal family confidant Prabhakar Rana told the Ambassador March 19 that King Gyanendra had been discussing abdication but had yet to make a decision. Meanwhile, mixed messages from India had not clarified the King's thinking. Rana also relayed that former Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa planned to go to New Delhi soon with a warning for the Government of India (GOI) and Indian political leaders that the Maoists would likely foment a significant political crisis in the coming weeks.

King Considering Abdication

[1](#)2. (C/NF) Royal family confidant Prabhakar Rana told the Ambassador March 19 that he had been discussing abdication with the King and had encouraged King Gyanendra to carefully consider such a move. The King had not yet made a decision but now recognized that his statement on the eve of Nepal's Democracy Day in February had caused a public uproar. Prime Minister G.P. Koirala's public remarks on March 12 that the time was ripe for the King to abdicate were made without consultation with the Palace. Rana believed that this lack of consultation was a sign that the PM had abandoned constitutional monarchy (Ref B). The Ambassador reflected that, in making the remarks, the PM had prevented the Maoists from labeling him a closet royalist and using him as an excuse to take to the streets. Nonetheless, the King remained a useful ideological foil for the Maoists. Rana regretted that the Palace was not getting a clear signal from India. He noted that, based on his discussion with many Indian political leaders, most of them clearly supported the King's abdication (and that of Crown Prince Paras) in favor of his grandson Hridayendra. That said, some contacts of the King had given Gyanendra the impression that Indian National Congress Party Chairman Sonia Gandhi was not pushing for

abdication. Even if that were true, Prabhakar pointed out, popular pressure would force Sonia Gandhi to abandon the King, in the event of a future crisis.

Former PM Thapa Headed To India

¶3. (C) Rana told the Ambassador that Former Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa would be traveling to New Delhi soon to tell the GOI that the Maoists would likely foment a serious political crisis within weeks. According to Rana, Thapa believed that the Maoists retained the option of violent takeover and their patience was waning. (Ref C). Either the Maoists would make a good faith effort to meet the requirements for entry into an interim government (return seized land, cease abductions and extortion, and stop public displays of arms and uniforms), or they would sow confusion to bring about the collapse of the present government. Since the former seemed unlikely based on present Maoist behavior, Thapa hoped to encourage India to use its diplomatic weight more urgently and more effectively with the players in Kathmandu. Thapa intended to seek an audience with the King after his return from India.

Comment: April Is the Cruellest Month

¶4. (C/NF) Unless King Gyanendra and his son abdicate or the country opts to discard the monarchy in favor of a republic (the more likely outcome in Post's view), the Palace will remain the focus of Maoist efforts to incite popular unrest and confusion. The Maoists will continue to cite "royal plots" to put pressure on the Prime Minister, who insists it is for the Constituent Assembly alone to declare Nepal a republic. As April, a warm month historically favored for political agitation approaches, further missteps by the King would be even more dangerous. Even if the King remains silent behind the walls of Narayanhiti Palace, April's approach could well signal confrontation between Nepal's government and the Maoists.

MORIARTY